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NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

JOINT APPLIED PROJECT

Analysis of Army Contracting Command Contract Specialist Vacancy Announcements

By: Vicki J. Carrington
September 2010

Advisors: Deborah Gibbons
Harold Nelson

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The following recommendations are made 1) Specify exactly what minimum skills/abilities/experience are required for each position; 2) Incorporate knowledge of the Federal Acquisition Regulations as needed for mid- and supervisory-levels; 3) Add professional certifications are desired; 4) Utilize the benefits package as a motivator to attract applicants; and 5) Recommend ACC revise and update the introductory statement on the announcements to include what and how it is exciting to be an Army Civilian.

Army Contracting Command can ensure successful contracting outcomes to meet mission requirements by providing applicants with the right information and the right motivation.

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ANALYSIS OF ARMY CONTRACTING COMMAND CONTRACT SPECIALIST VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENTS

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

from the

NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
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ANALYSIS OF ARMY CONTRACTING COMMAND CONTRACT SPECIALIST VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENTS

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This thesis reviewed the current external Contract Specialist vacancy announcements of the Department of the Army – Army Contracting Command, and compared them to vacancy announcements from other government agencies and private industry. Content analysis was used to systematically identify requirements for knowledge, skills and abilities for the entry-, mid- and supervisory-level Contracting Specialist positions in Army Contracting Command.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACC	Army Contracting Command
AMC	Army Materiel Command
APP	Accredited Purchasing Practitioner
CCCM	Certified Commercial Contracts Manager
CFCM	Certified Federal Contracts Manager
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CP	Career program
CPCM	Certified Professional Contracts Manager
CPM	Certified Purchasing Manager
CPOL	Civilian Personnel Online
CPSM	Certified Professional in Supply Management
DA	Department of the Army
DAU	Defense Acquisition University
DAWIA	Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act
DoD	Department of Defense
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
EHA	Expedited Hiring Authority
FAR	Federal Acquisition Regulation
GS	General Schedule
HR	Human Resources Department
ISM	Institute of Supply Management
KSA	Knowledge, skills and abilities
NCMA	National Contract Management Association
OPM	Office of Personnel Management
RFP	Request for Proposal
RFQ	Request for Quote
TACOM-RI	Tank-Automotive Armaments Command – Rock Island
USA	United States of America

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a general overview of this research project. The author will provide the background, research purpose and objectives. The chapter will then describe the research methodology, the limitations of the research and the primary research questions. Finally, the organization of this report will be explained and a chapter summary is provided.

B. BACKGROUND

In 1990, the Pentagon imposed a civilian hiring freeze for the Department of Defense. This freeze directly affected the Army's contracting workforce. Through elimination of some positions, those jobs lost through attrition and the hiring freeze, the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the contracting workforce were diminished. By the mid-1990s, the number of contracts increased dramatically but the contracting workforce was not replenished. There was a huge increase in the contract dollars but a reduction in the number of contracting personnel.

According to the "Report of the Commission on Army Acquisition and Program Management in Expeditionary Operations" (Gansler, 2007), the Army was experiencing a shortage of experienced civilian Contracting Officers. While the focus of the Gansler report is on Contingency Contracting, it addresses deficiencies in the entire Army contracting field.

As a result of the Gansler report, the United States Army Materiel Command stood up the Army Contracting Command (ACC) that will be responsible for more than $85 billion in contracts annually (Gansler, 2007). The ACC provides oversight to Installation Contracting Command and the Expeditionary Contracting Command (Leipold, 2008).

The complexities of current and future requirements demand increased knowledge skills, and abilities (KSAs). Complex requirements may require negotiation, advanced contracting and/or pricing skills. Simpler requirements may only require the basic of contracting skills.

ACC requires talented, trained contracting personnel in order to meet their mission requirements. Hiring a quantity of entry-, mid- or supervisory-level personnel will build the workforce for the future, but hiring personnel with the right mix of KSAs to start with would speed up the capabilities of the workforce. Is the Army Contracting Command publishing vacancy announcements that attract contracting personnel with the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities?

C. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objective of this research is to develop an assessment and critique to determine whether the Army Contracting Command's vacancy announcements are effective in acquiring contracting personnel with the right levels of knowledge, skills and abilities to meet mission requirements.

D. SCOPE, LIMITATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS

Data analyses used in this research project are not exact for numerous reasons. First, a review of a limited number of vacancy announcements for ACC, other government agencies and private industry will be provided. Second, the vacancy announcements for ACC are written differently than those in private industry. The government vacancy announcements list many required skills, abilities, and competencies that may not be in the private industry vacancy announcement. The government uses a computer program to search out key words in the applications that refer to those in the vacancy announcement. This may not be true for private industry. Finally, the data results used are only as accurate as the vacancy announcements extracted from a wide database and may not be a reliable sampling. Larger or smaller sample sizes may provide different findings.

E. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. Problem Identification

The process of hiring contracting personnel with the needed knowledge, skills and abilities will be a significant challenge for the Army Contracting Command. The initial position requirements listed in the vacancy announcements may need to be revised or completely overhauled in order to acquire the correct personnel to meet mission needs.

2. Appropriate Data

Research for this thesis will consist of collecting data from various Army Contracting Command vacancy announcements. Data will also be collected from other government agencies and private industry (e.g., Fortune 500 companies, etc.). Entry-, mid- and supervisory-level vacancy announcements for contracting personnel will be analyzed.

3. Appropriate Analysis

Reports, data, and information collected will be compared and analyzed to determine the need to develop improved processes, if any, based upon the finalized project objectives list.

F. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This thesis addresses one primary and two secondary research questions:

1. Primary Research Question:

 a. Does the Army issue vacancy announcements that attract skilled, experienced contracting personnel?

 b. Is this process successful, or can it be improved?

2. Secondary Research Questions:

 a. Do the vacancy announcements truly reflect the knowledge, skills and abilities required for ACC's contracting mission?

 b. What knowledge, skills, abilities or requirements does private industry look for when posting a Contract Specialist job announcement, and which ones would be relevant to the Army's purpose?

G. DEFINITIONS AND KEY TERMS

Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) is the set of regulations issued by federal agencies to govern the acquisition process of procuring supplies and services.

Contracting Series, GS-1102: This series includes various positions that supervise, perform, and develop policies and procedures for professional work. The Contracting series involves the procurement of supplies, services, construction or research and development. This is done by market research, negotiations, evaluation of contract price proposals and the administration or termination of contracts and closeouts. Positions in this series require knowledge of legislation, regulations, and methods used in contracting. A knowledge of industry practices, business knowledge, supply sources, cost factors, and requirements are also needed. (OPM, 1983)

The **Contract Specialist** is involved in the pre-award and post-award process of procuring supplies and services. Duties may include market research, contract planning, price/cost analysis, contract administration, and termination.

The **Supervisory Contract Specialist** includes those duties of a Contract Specialist as listed above; in addition, he/she performs the administrative and human resource management functions relative to the staff supervised. Plans, schedules, and assigns work to subordinates. Guidelines and performance expectations are developed for staff members; provides feedback and

periodically evaluates employee performance. Provides advice, counsel, and/or give instruction to staff members. The Supervisory Contract Specialist also issues disciplinary measures as appropriate to the authority delegated in this area. Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) policies and program activities are part of the duties.

H. ORGANIZATION OF RESEARCH

This thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter I, the Introduction, discusses the purpose and objectives for this study, provides background information, describes the research methodology and the limitations of the research, lists the research questions, and explains the organization of this report. Chapter II, Current ACC Vacancy Announcements Processes, discusses the historical overview of the ACC's vacancy announcement process, the current state of the contracting workforce, current and relevant regulations, policies and processes, and their impact on the vacancy announcement process. Chapter III, Current Private Industry Vacancy Announcement Processes, describes a review of private industry vacancy announcements and a review of outside organization guidelines from the National Contract Management Association (NCMA) and the National Association of Purchasing Management (NAPM). Chapter IV, Vacancy Announcement Analysis, analyzes and compares the content of vacancy announcements from the ACC, other government agencies, and private industry. Chapter V presents the author's research conclusions,

provides a summary of the research findings, and discusses possible areas for further research.

I. SUMMARY

Army Contracting Command publishes various vacancy announcements for various levels of contracting personnel. The complexities of current and future mission requirements demand increased knowledge, skills and abilities of contracting personnel. Simpler requirements may only require the basic of contracting skills. I plan to use this research to identify process improvements in the hiring arena through an assessment and critique of the vacancy announcement process. The next chapter will provide information on the current ACC Vacancy Announcement processes.

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II. CURRENT ACC VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT PROCESS

A. OVERVIEW

This chapter provides an overview of the current state of the contracting workforce and Army Contracting Command's vacancy announcement process. Any current and relevant regulations, policies or procedures and their impact on the vacancy announcement process will be reviewed. Finally, a summary is provided.

B. BACKGROUND

1. Current State of ACC Contracting Workforce

The Army Contracting Command's mission is to provide complete contracting support to the warfighters through all military operations of the Army. ACC's vision is to provide professional and quality contracting solutions. ACC has approximately 70 percent of the contracting personnel within the Army and is responsible for making contracting a high-quality, core competency. (Parsons, 2009)

In an August, 2009 briefing to Army Sustainment Command, ACC Executive Jeffrey Parsons talked about contracting support to the warfighter. Mr. Parson presented Figure 1, ACC Trends & Impacts, which illustrates the increase in workload and the decrease in the contracting workforce since 1995. In the years since 1995, the workload has increased by 359 percent and the workforce has decreased by 53 percent.

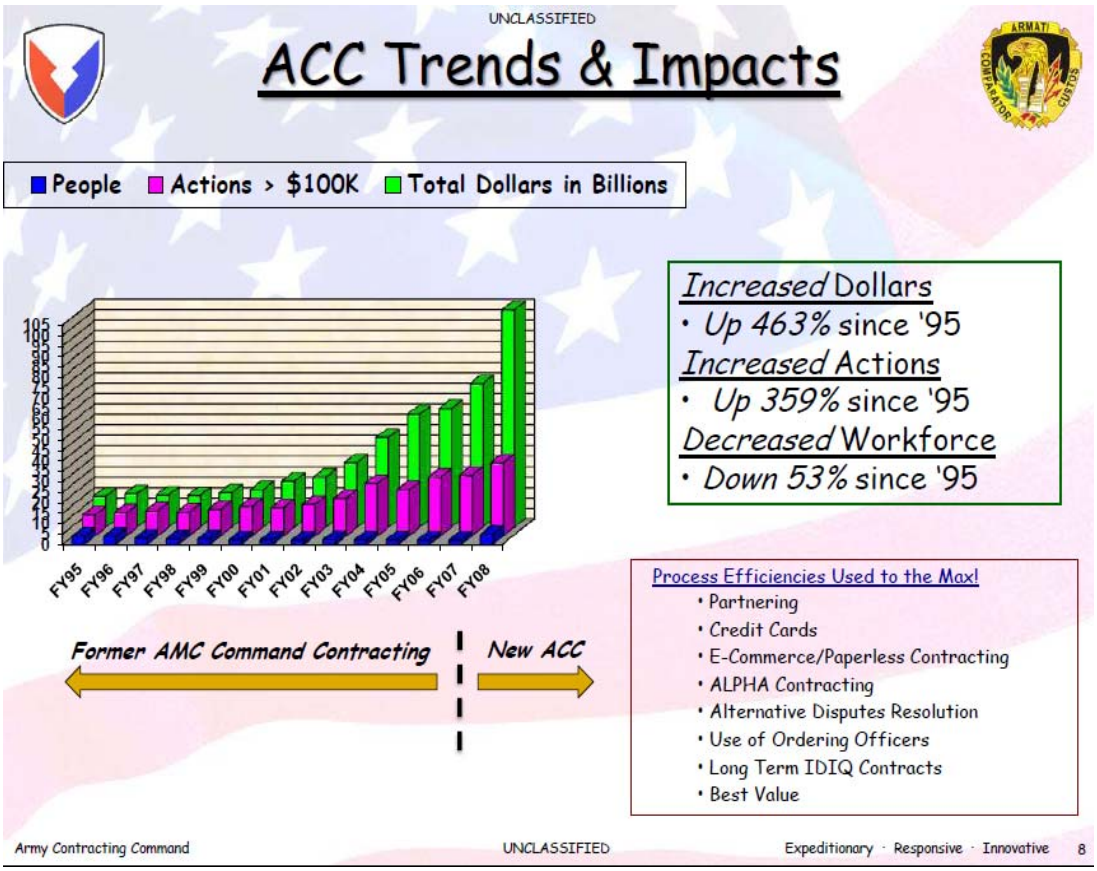


Figure 1. ACC Trends and Impacts (Parsons, 2009)

Melissa Rider, Chief of the Commanding General's Staff Group of ACC, addressed the Women in Defense (WID) Workshop on October 14, 2009. Ms. Rider talked about ACC's workforce issues. As illustrated in her presentation (see Figure 2), ACC has a total of 3,476 contracting personnel. There is a significant gap in the 10 to 20 year experience level of contract specialists. Within the workforce, 38 percent have zero to 10 years of experience, and 46.5 percent have 20 plus years of experience. That leaves a 10-year gap with 15.45 percent of the workforce. Twelve percent of the current workforce has 31 to 35 years of experience. This data shows the significant shortages in contracting personnel

in the five- to twenty-year group of experience. At various ACC locations, half of the workforce has five years or less experience in contracting. There are wide gaps at the more experienced Contracting Officer and middle management levels which results in a decrease in the experience levels in the leadership positions.

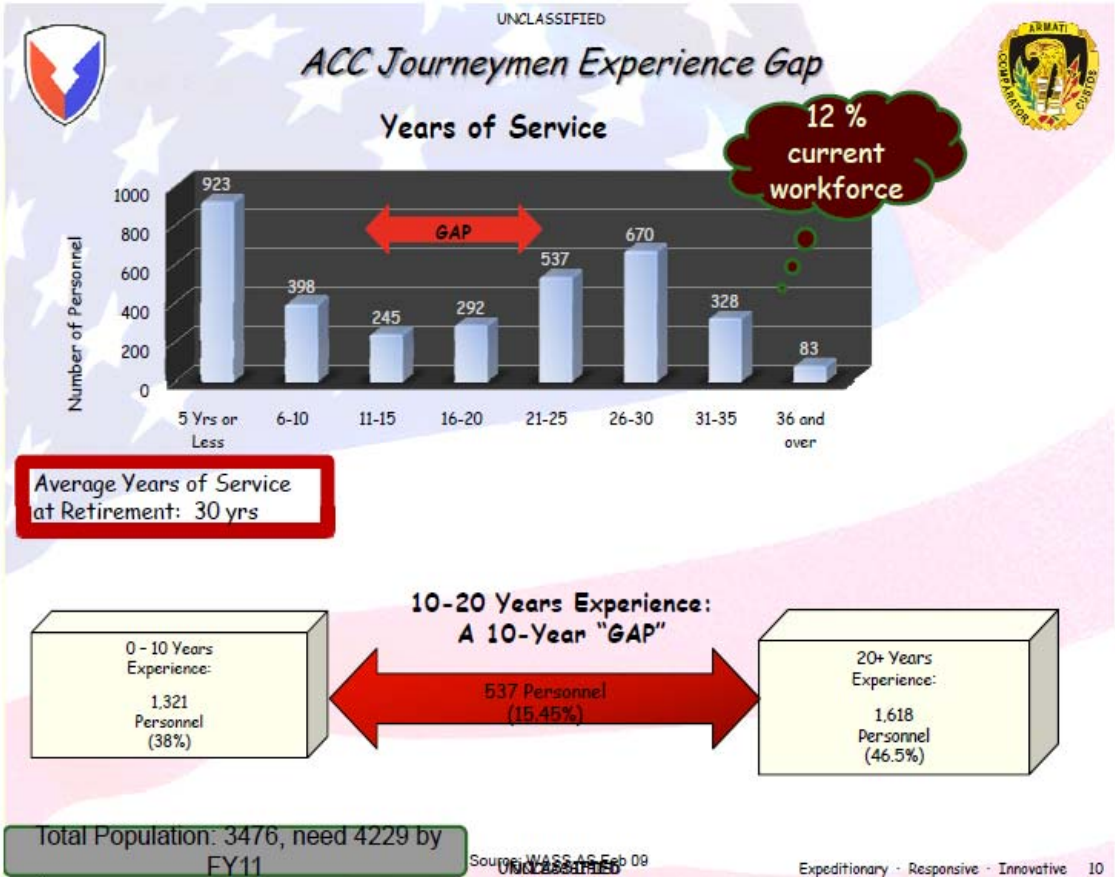


Figure 2. ACC Journeymen Experience Gap (Rider, 2009)

ACC is experiencing increased risk in the awarding, administration and closeouts of contracts due to the contracting personnel shortage. The ACC's goal is to increase the contracting workforce from 3,476 to 4,229 by the year 2011 (Rider, 2009).

Copper Perry of ACC G-1 (Civilian Personnel Office) told Larry D. McCaskill of the www.Army.mil/-news the strategy is to look for ways to recruit qualified Contracting Specialists at the mid- and senior levels. Colonel Debra Fix, also of the G-1, stated:

> There's a lot of competition for acquisition professionals. I'm confident that with the tools we are putting into place, that we will see a growth in the contracting field and we will attract qualified and talented individuals to serve their nation.

ACC is looking for innovative ways to reach potential employees for all levels of contracting. ACC is utilizing local job fairs across the nation, posting vacancy announcements on the internet, and partnering with other federal agencies, private industry and various universities (McCaskill, 2009).

The Department of the Army selected Army Contracting Command to be the pilot for the Contracting Fellows Program. This program includes four years of training and earning a master's degree. ACC plans to hire 25 new employees using this program (McCaskill, 2009). It will be at least four years before ACC sees the result of this program.

ACC developed a Web site, www.Armyhire.com, in order to target and attract the younger workforce to the contracting career field. Currently there is no data on the success of this Web site. According to the article, Expedited Hiring Authority (EHA) is being utilized by ACC to directly hire qualified applicants quickly. The EHA eliminates certain practices in the federal hiring

process in order to get applicants into the workforce faster. ACC has employed 30 new hires since July 1, 2009 (McCaskill, 2009).

ACC is in direct competition for contract specialists with other defense agencies, federal agencies and the private sector. The use of EHA, Fellows program, etc. may assist in the hiring process. Nevertheless, the resulting number of new hires is minimal compared with the overall requirement.

2. Overview of ACC's Vacancy Announcement Process

According to Civilian Personnel Online (CPOL), the Human Resource Agency for the Department of the Army, the agency/organization that is in need of personnel should choose the position description that best fits their mission needs. The Department of the Army has several position descriptions for contracting (i.e., entry-level, mid-level or supervisory). The entry level is developmental in that the chosen applicant starts typically at a GS-07 position and after completing time in grade and achieving specific certification levels can end up in a GS-11 position after two years. Mid-level and supervisory positions can begin at a GS-11 position or higher. (CPOL, 2010)

The requiring organization should consider their mission, career development ladders, and recruitment and retention practices. The position description should contain adequate information to determine the title, series, and grade of the position required. (CPOL, 2010) This research is focusing on the external vacancy announcements for Contract Specialist and Supervisory

Contracting Specialist, series 1102. A job analysis of the major duties should show the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) that are required to perform the contracting tasks. The major job requirements should be identified in the current official position description. Identification of these major job requirements and KSAs should assist in identifying those applicants who will be the best qualified to perform the position. (CPOL, 2010)

The requesting organization is given a list of words by the Human Resource Office that helps describe the KSAs that are needed for the position. The organization then chooses a limited number of key words (four to six). Key words could include contract administration, modifications, negotiations, pre-award, post-award, cost/pricing, procurement, strategy, etc. The key words chosen are geared towards the level of expertise required. Once the position description, key words, any specialized experiences, required skills and desired skills are selected, the organization submits the information to its Human Resources department. The vacancy announcement will then be posted either internally through CPOL or externally through USA Jobs Web site (or both). Announcements for these positions require on-line applications.

As resumes are submitted through USA Jobs or CPOL, they are searched electronically for the key words, additional qualifications and educational minimums required for the position. If the computer program does not locate the key words in the resume, the applicant will not be selected for further consideration.

Those resumes that are selected by the computerized search will be referred to the Selecting Official(s). They will determine if the qualified applicants will be rated and ranked by a Human Resource Specialist, a subject-matter expert or a panel. Depending on the GS level of the position, an interview may be necessary. All applicants for GS-12 positions and higher must be interviewed. (OPM, 2010a) Interviews are conducted by a panel. The Selecting Official(s) and Panel develop the interview questions jointly. The Selecting Official(s) may conduct a review and approve the questions before the panel initiates their interviews. The Panel Chairperson prepares a list of candidates recommended for selection consideration and provides it to the Selecting Official(s). Candidates will be listed in alphabetical order for each grouping (not by rank). There may be two or more groupings, e.g., Most Highly Qualified, Highly Qualified, Fully Qualified, etc. The Selecting Official(s) makes the final decision on which applicant is chosen for the position. (TACOM-RI Acquisition Center Selection/Promotion Guide, personal communication, August 2008)

C. RELEVANT REGULATIONS, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES

1. The Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) became law in November 1990. It required the Department of Defense to develop career paths in the acquisition arena. This included education and training standards, requirements, and courses for both the

military and civilian personnel. The Department of the Army has 14 career fields with three levels of certification:

- Level I – Entry level – GS 5-9
- Level II – Intermediate level – GS 9-12
- Level III – Advanced level – GS 13 and above

The Army Contracting Career Program (CP-14) focuses on experience, education, training, and self-development for each level of certification. The Defense Acquisition University is the major training provider for certifications for the Department of Defense. (DAU, 2010)

2. In accordance with Title 5 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 330.707 and Executive Order 13078, vacancy announcements must include a variety of information. Besides the typical description of duties and minimum qualification requirements (education, competencies, KSAs, selective placement factors, etc.), the issues of rating procedures, assessments, interviews and/or drug tests must be addressed. The Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) statement, the Reasonable Accommodation statement and information on how to claim veteran's preference must be included in the vacancy announcement. (OPM, 2010b)

D. IMPACT OF POLICIES ON THE VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT PROCESS

The DAU certifications are required to be met within a specific timeframe after hiring. Level I certification requires specific classes and one year of contracting experience. Level II continues with additional required

classes and a total of two years of contracting experience. Level II must be completed by the end of the first two years of employment. Level III has specific class criteria and a minimum of four years of contracting experience before certification can be awarded. (DAU, 2010)

The OPM minimum qualification standards were not intended to be assessment tools. The standards specify the minimum educational or minimum experience qualifications required for each job description. The minimum qualification standards are not a valid tool to define job performance. (Partnership for Public Service, 2004)

The DAU certification requirements and the OPM minimum qualification standards are used as the basis for developing the vacancy announcements. However, a more detailed analysis of the position description needs to be addressed before developing the vacancy announcement.

E. SUMMARY

The information provided in this chapter confirms the significant shortage of contracting personnel in the Army Contracting Command. The probability of massive retirements and the lack of experienced personnel make it essential that ACC review its vacancy announcement process.

ACC’s hiring process begins with identifying workforce requirements that will meet mission needs. The vacancy announcement process follows the guidelines of

the Office of Personnel Management, the Army's Civilian Personnel Office, and the Defense Acquisition University.

One of the priorities for ACC is to ensure that it provides for an accurate assessment of resumes based on the content of the vacancy announcement from the very beginning. ACC requires an effective process for targeting potential contracting personnel.

Chapter III provides for information on private industry's vacancy announcement process.

III. CURRENT PRIVATE INDUSTRY VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the industry vacancy announcement process and of the industry-contracting workforce. A review was made of the guidelines of the National Contract Management Association and the Institute for Supply Management. A summary is included.

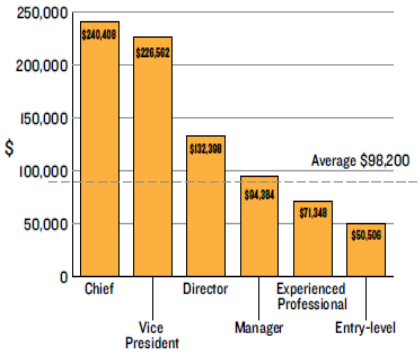
B. CURRENT STATE OF INDUSTRY CONTRACTING WORKFORCE

According to the 2009 article "Acquisition Workforce Challenge Motivation for Government vs. Industry Employment," written by John Dobriansky for the *Defense AR Journal*, the federal government - and for the purpose of this research, Army Contracting Command (ACC) - is directly competing with industry for contracting personnel. For many companies, the contracting/purchasing efforts are not a separate functioning department. These processes may be filtered through the sales, marketing, legal or finance departments. Some larger companies, (i.e., Boeing or Lockheed Martin) are more likely to have departments specifically geared for contracting or purchasing efforts. (Dobriansky, 2009)

The 1990's cutbacks in the Army contracting workforce and the increase in retirements have increased the demand for contracting professionals. There are many common motivational factors for both government and

industry. These include professional development, promotional capability, pay incentives, and employment stability. (Dobriansky, 2009)

The Institute for Supply Management's (ISM) 2010 Salary Survey Results-Summary (see Figure 3) illustrates the average industry salary for purchasing/supply management/sourcing personnel. The average salary for entry-level supply management professional is $50,506 and mid-level, $71,348.



Average Salary by Position

Average salary by position covered a range of nearly $193,000. Average salary by job title is reported below.

Chief, Purchasing/Supply Management/Sourcing	$240,408
Vice President, Purchasing/Supply Management/Sourcing	$226,562
Director, Purchasing/Supply Management/Sourcing	$132,398
Manager, Purchasing/Supply Management/Sourcing	$94,384
Experienced Supply Management Professional	$71,348
Entry-level Supply Management Professional	$50,506

Figure 3. ISM's 2010 Salary Survey Results Summary (2010)

The Institute for Supply Management (ISM) posted the survey in January/February 2010. The survey was sent to a random sampling of members and non-members. The confidence level for the overall average salary is plus or minus four percent. (ISM, 2010)

According to the Salary Table 2010-RUS from Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the beginning salary for an Army Contracting Command (ACC) entry-level contract specialist (GS-07) is $38,790 and for mid-level (GS-11) is $57,408. This data illustrates there is a significant

difference in compensation between ACC contract specialists and those in private industry. (OPM, 2010)

There are many different benefits/motivational factors for working in private industry. Benefits including sick leave, vacation time and retirement plans are available in many companies. Motivations for industry contracting professionals can include promotions, advancement, or the bonus for meeting business goals (i.e., meeting or exceeding profit goals, business retention, capturing new business). (Dobriansky, 2009)

The federal government offers employees many opportunities for professional development. The Department of Defense (DoD) offers training through the Defense Acquisition University (DAU), colleges, universities, and outside organizations. Contract Specialists are provided with many opportunities for current training in the contracting field. DoD has been mandated to provide regular professional training to the acquisition personnel. (Dobriansky, 2009)

Kate Lorenz, editor for Career Builder.com, states in her 2010 article, “Why You Want to Work for the Government,” that unlike private employers, the government offers several health plans and insurance options to employees. The government pays a major portion of the premiums. Government employees receive 13 days of paid vacation for the first 5 years, 20 days for the next 10 years and 26 days after the 15th year of service. All federal employees earn 13 days of sick leave each year, which can be accrued over their length of service. The Federal Retirement System is part of the

employment package. The government pays in an automatic percentage and the employee may add up to a specific portion of their salary each year to their retirement account. (Lorenz, 2010)

A February 2007 article in the *Washington Post*, "Job Security Lures Young and Old to Government Work," Stephen Barr talks about a survey by the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB). According to the survey, job security was the single most important factor in deciding to work for the government for new hires under 30 years old and those 30 years-and-older. Annual pay raises, vacation time, sick leave, health insurance and retirement were also cited. (Barr, 2007)

The Merit Systems Protection Board provides recommendations for improving civil service and through this survey found that entry-level new hires had good impressions of working for the government with no significant differences based on age. The survey provided the following statistics for the perceived strengths of federal employment (1) 97 percent - job security (2) 89 percent - benefits and 86 percent — promotional opportunities. The MSPB surveyed 2,000 full-time professional and administrative new hires into career, entry-level positions (GS-05 through GS-09). (Barr, 2007)

Barr's article goes on to state that Steve Nelson, director of the Office of Policy and Evaluation for the MSPB, cautions that more research is needed to determine whether the differences between new government hires and those choosing private-sector jobs. (Barr, 2007)

If salary/compensation is the only deciding factor in obtaining an entry-level or mid-level contracting position, industry may have the upper hand in obtaining contracting personnel. On the other hand, the perception of job security, employment stability, professional development and promotion potential may bring new personnel to the government.

C. OVERVIEW OF INDUSTRY VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Procurement and contract management are similar to each other. They both consist of the sales or acquisition process. Procurement includes the selection of suppliers based on a variety of factors: availability or scheduling, reliability and price. Contract management is a wide range of responsibilities that include administrative skills, managing, negotiating, planning, and organization. (www.ncmahq.org, 2010)

The vacancy announcement process for private industry is similar to that of Army Contracting Command. The company must determine the need to recruit for a new or replacement contract specialist. The contract specialist can also be called purchasing agent, procurement specialist, contract administrator, supply management specialist, etc.

According to Susan M. Heathfield, “Plan Your Recruiting to Ensure Successful Candidate Selection, July 2010, www.humanresource.about.com, a job description is developed from an analysis of the duties, responsibilities, required skills, desired outcomes and the work environment of the specific position. Salary range is determined based on duties and requirements of

the position, the size of the company, and other factors. These vacancy announcements are placed in the local or national newspapers, on the company Web site, professional association Web sites and other various online internet resources. (Heathfield, 2010)

Due to the vast array of companies and the many different avenues vacancy announcements can be posted, Section D of this chapter will review guidelines of two professional associations: the National Contract Management Association and the Institute for Supply Management.

D. REVIEW OF EXTERNAL PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

1. National Contract Management Association

The National Contract Management Association (NCMA) is a professional association of contract professionals from industry and the government. NCMA provides contracting knowledge through education services, data base access, professional networking connections and career management. According to the NCMA Web site, www.ncmahq.org, NCMA encourages the educational advancement and the opportunities of professional growth in the contract management career field. The NCMA mission is to "improve organizational performance through effective contract management" (NCMA, 2010).

NCMA has three certification programs for the contract management profession: (1) Certified Federal Contracts Manager (CFCM) certifies the person to be knowledgeable about the federal contracts management arena. (2) Certified Commercial Contracts Manager (CCCM) shows that a person has knowledge about the commercial

contracts management environment. (3) The Certified Professional Contracts Manager (CPCM) is a combination certification that shows the person to have knowledge in both arenas: federal government and commercial contracting. Each certification has specific standards to be met including education, experience, training, and knowledge. Both the CFCM and the CPCM require knowledge of the Federal Acquisition Regulations. These certifications are professional distinctions and are based on an examination of the applicant's knowledge. NCMA developed these certifications to increase the professional standards and performance in the contract management field. (NCMA, 2010)

NCMA provides the following guidelines to its member employers to fill contracting vacancies:

a. In the article, "Precruitment," on www.ncmahq.org, author Peter Weddle (2010a) states that the process of 'precruitment' should include workforce planning, reputation management, asset management, resource and process management. The company should review the demand for new or replacement contracting personnel, assess the company brand, analyze the company Web site career area, other internet pages, and review the content of the job postings. (Weddle, 2010a)

b. In the article "A Set of Master Keys in Words," www.ncmahq.org, Peter Weddle (2010b) states that keywords are a central feature used in searching databases. So employers are urged to prioritize specific keywords in their job postings that may "unlock talent other employers can't reach" (Weddle, 2010b).

c. The article “Job Description,” www.ncmahq.org, (NCMA, 2010), provides contract level job descriptions for the contracting professional. NCMA does not make the distinction on whether these positions are industry wide or federal government. There are three levels depending on complexity and responsibilities. Entry-Level Contract Professional includes specific repetitive processes, routine contract agreements and other documentation. Mid-Level Contract Professional can include non-routine or specialized contract actions, analysis of issues and resolutions. Senior level Contract Professional includes managing the critical formation of high visibility/high risk contracts, contract management, directs negotiations, administrative policies and highly complex contractual vehicles. (NCMA, 2010)

NCMA has suggested the following desired certification level for each of the corresponding professional level. (see Figure 4)

Entry Level:	Certified Commercial Contracts Manager (CCCM) or Certified Federal Contracts Manager (CFCM) desirable.
Mid Level:	Certified Commercial Contracts Manager (CCCM) or Certified Federal Contracts Manager (CFCM) required. Certified Professional Contracts Manager (CPCM) desirable.
Senior Level:	Certified Commercial Contracts Manager (CCCM) or Certified Federal Contracts Manager (CFCM) required. Certified Professional Contracts Manager (CPCM) highly desirable.

Figure 4. Contracting Professional levels and desired certifications (NCMA, 2010).

NCMA has an area on its Web site where employers can post vacancy announcements for an internship posting for free, or regular job postings for a fee. NCMA also

offers a free Contract Management Career Fair at its annual World Congress conference. It offers the ability for contract management organizations or government agencies to meet face-to-face with job seekers. (NCMA, 2010)

2. Institute for Supply Management

According to the Institute for Supply Management (ISM) Web site, www.ism.ws, ISM is the largest supply management association in the world. (ISM, 2010)

> Supply Management is the identification, acquisition, access, positioning and management of resources and related capabilities the organization needs or potentially needs in the attainment of strategic objectives. (ISM, 2010)

The Institute of Supply Management has a membership that includes professionals from industry and government in a variety of fields. Supply Management includes purchasing, contract development and administration, negotiations, logistics, distribution, warehousing, manufacturing, economic forecasting and materials management. Depending on the size of the organization, the number of employees operating in these functions can number from a few to thousands. (ISM, 2010) For the purposes of this research, there is a focus on the purchasing, contract development, administration, and negotiations fields.

The ISM currently has three different certifications in the supply management profession: (1) The Certified Professional in Supply Management (CPSM) requires three years full-time, professional supply management experience, a Bachelor's degree and the applicant is

required to pass three CPSM examinations. (2) The Certified Purchasing Manager Program (CPM) is currently being phased out and is available only for recertification. The CPM required five years of full time professional supply management experience or has a four-year degree and three years of experience. This certification is recognized by organizations as a solid base of purchasing knowledge. (3) The Accredited Purchasing Practitioner (APP) is also in recertification status only. This certification is primarily for entry-level purchasing functions. (ISM, 2010)

The Institute for Supply Management offers the following guidelines to its member employers for posting vacancy announcements.

a. In ISM's monthly magazine, *Inside Supply Management*, the article "Attributes of Recruiting Effectiveness" by Steven Edwards (2009), states companies should develop a recruiting workforce with high interpersonal skills. Employers should develop a strong internship program and develop strong relationships with colleges and universities.

b. ISM urges employers to identify their critical needs when writing the job vacancy announcements.

The ISM Web site provides a career center where employers can post vacancy announcements for internship postings for free, or regular job postings for a fee. ISM also offers a number of conferences and seminars throughout the year with the ability for supply management organizations or government agencies to meet face-to-face with job seekers. (ISM, 2010)

ISM provides its members with a wide variety of educational products and programs. It promotes the growth of professional skills and knowledge needed in the world of supply management. (ISM, 2010)

E. SUMMARY

The NCMA professional organization and Web site offers industry valuable tools and information for the development and posting of vacancy announcements for contracting professionals. NCMA offers three certification levels in the contracting field. These certifications are widely accepted in the industry. The Certified Federal Contract Manager and Certified Professional Contract Manager both require knowledge of Federal Acquisition Regulations. (NCMA, 2010)

The ISM professional organization and Web site offers The Certified Professional in Supply Management certification is for the broad field of Supply Management. The two certifications for Purchasing Manager and the Accredited Purchasing Practitioner are being phased out and are available for recertification only. (ISM, 2010)

Chapter IV will focus on the analysis and critique of Army Contracting Command and industry job vacancy announcements for contract specialists.

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IV. VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT ANALYSIS

A. INTRODUCTION

In order to improve the adequacy of the vacancy announcements utilized by Army Contracting Command (ACC), a comparison of best practices of ACC, other government agencies and private industry was conducted. A content analysis/keyword search analysis of Contract specialist vacancy announcements was performed. This chapter provides the purpose of the analysis, the selection of the vacancy announcements, the analysis, best practices, strategies, and the summary of findings.

B. PURPOSE OF ANALYSIS

The purpose of this content/keyword search analysis is to compile cross-comparative data between ACC's vacancy announcements for entry-level, mid-level and Supervisory Contract Specialists, and those similar announcements for other government agencies and private industry. A summary of findings is provided resulting from the compilation of the data. The intention of this analysis is to determine if ACC can improve its advertising for Contract Specialists with the required knowledge, skills, and abilities to meet ACC's mission needs for entry-, mid-level and supervisory positions by comparing to those announcements of other government agencies and private industry firms.

Vacancy announcements available from several Fortune 500 companies were analyzed as part of the private industry announcements for this research project. According to Fortune Magazine's company statement, the

Fortune 500 annual list comprises the top United States closely held and public companies ranked by revenue annually. This list is published by *Fortune* magazine and includes publicly and privately held companies for which revenues are available to the public.

C. SELECTION OF VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. ACC Vacancy Announcements

Vacancy announcements for the Contracting Specialist positions across Army Contracting Command are the same/similar to each other. As the announcements utilize the same position descriptions, one vacancy announcement was selected for entry-level, mid-level, and supervisory-level position from ACC postings on www.usajobs.com.

2. Industry Vacancy Announcements

The major sources for this content analysis are vacancy announcements extracted from various internet Web sites. The author went to Google.com, NCMA.org, ISM.ws and various other Web sites and entered "Contract Specialist" into the search tool. The job announcements were pulled for this research if they specified the level of Contract Specialist position they were meant for. The announcements were then reviewed for content. The announcements were chosen based on the descriptive criteria provided in them so a good comparison could be made against the ACC announcements.

All of the announcements were then reviewed to see how many companies were Fortune 500 companies. The resulting samples contain 14 entry-level announcements pulled from internet Web sites of which five are Fortune

500 companies. Of 15 mid-level announcements pulled, there were a total of five announcements from Fortune 500 companies. Fifteen supervisory announcements were pulled with six of those being from Fortune 500 companies. These announcements were extracted from various industry Web sites, NCMA, ISM, or other internet Web sites during the time frame of June 1, 2010, thru August 31, 2010. Three announcements for other government agencies for each level were randomly pulled from the USAJOBS Web site. (See Table 1)

Distribution of Sampled Announcements by Level		PERCENTAGE OF SAMPLE
Entry level		
Other Government	3	5.56%
Fortune 500	5	9.26%
Other industry	9	16.67%
Mid-level		
Other Government	3	5.56%
Fortune 500	6	11.11%
Other industry	10	18.52%
Supervisory level		
Other Government	3	5.56%
Fortune 500	6	11.11%
Other industry	9	16.67%
TOTAL SAMPLE	54	100.00%

Table 1. Distribution of Sampled Announcement by Level

D. ANALYSIS

1. Content Analysis

Harold H. Kassarjian (1977) wrote “Content Analysis in Consumer Research.” He defined content analysis as a

research technique for analyzing communications content. Content analysis must be objective, systematic and quantitative.

Categories of analysis must be defined precisely. Systematic means that the inclusion or exclusion of categories must be consistent. Quantification is a measurement of the emphasis or omission of any given category. (Kassarjian, 1977) This analysis requires the categorization of different elements of the vacancy announcements provided for this research.

An Army Contracting Command (ACC) vacancy announcement for entry-level contract specialist was reviewed by two coders. Coder #1 is the author of this research and coder #2 for this effort is a coworker. Coder #1 developed a coding guide. One announcement was chosen to be reviewed. Coder #1 studied the announcement and made adjustments to the coding guide. When completed, the same announcement was provided to coder #2 who reviewed the announcement independently.

Upon comparison of coder #2's analysis with the original coding, the level agreement was 78 percent. The coding guide was adjusted to reflect the areas of disagreement. Once this was completed, the level of agreement was 93 percent. This process was used on individual announcements for the mid-level and supervisory-level announcements.

This research will utilize Content Analysis through the use of the coding guides to develop answers to the research questions listed in Chapter I. The text of each

vacancy announcement will be broken down into categories and a search for keywords in each category will be performed.

Each key word in the category will be compared to those in the industry and other government agency announcements. Any omissions will be the basis for recommendation to ACC to improve their vacancy announcements. This should ensure that the most appropriate position qualifications are listed for each level. This comparison of ACC vacancy announcements to those of other government agencies and private industry should identify areas of improvement for ACC.

The limitation to this research is that the analysis is limited to the identified categories and keywords searched. The data should be viewed and interpreted cautiously for what they are - the results of simple searches for keywords in a limited amount of vacancy announcements for Contract Specialists. The comparison of the data reveals the following information:

2. Entry-Level Data Analysis

A review of the coding guide for one ACC vacancy announcement and seventeen industry announcements for an entry-level Contract Specialist shows the following comparisons:

FINAL CODING ENTRY LEVEL CATEGORIES	
EDUCATION	
BACHELOR'S DEGREE	13 out of 17
WITH OR PLUS 24 HOURS OF BUSINESS	7 out of 17
DUTIES	
PRE AND POST AWARD FUNCTIONS	16 out of 17
NEGOTIATIONS	8 out of 17
MOTIVATION/BENEFITS	
SALARY	1 out of 17
HEALTH/LIFE INSURANCE	2 out of 17
FLEXIBLE OR ALTERNATE WORK SCHEDULE	1 out of 17
PAID HOLIDAYS, SICK LEAVE, VACATION	1 out of 17
PAID TRAINING/EDUCATION	0
POSSIBLE STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENT	0
POSSIBLE BONUSES, INCENTIVES	0
RETIREMENT	2 out of 17

Table 2. Entry-Level Coding Guide

By comparing other agencies and private industry vacancy announcements to those of ACC, this analysis shows the degree of importance for education that everyone including ACC requires for entry-level positions. There were five Fortune 500 companies in this analysis. Two of those five companies required the degree to be in business or have twenty-four hours of business in addition to the degree. The three other government agencies followed the same requirement as ACC.

It is of special interest to see that a minimal amount of organizations listed their benefits on the vacancy announcements in direct comparison to ACC announcements that have listed all of the above benefits.

Only one of the other government agencies listed a few of the above benefits. ACC far exceeds private industry in placing importance on the listing of benefits.

3. Mid-Level Data Analysis

A review of the coding guide for one ACC vacancy announcement and eighteen industry announcements for a mid-level Contract Specialist shows the following comparisons:

FINAL CODING MID-LEVEL	
CATEGORIES	
EDUCATION	
BACHELOR'S DEGREE	15 out of 18
WITH OR PLUS 24 HOURS OF BUSINESS	12 out of 18
SKILLS/EXPERIENCE	
CONTRACTING EXPERIENCE	16 out of 18
NEGOTIATIONS	11 out of 18
DUTIES	
PRE AND POST AWARD FUNCTIONS	14 out of 18
NEGOTIATIONS	9 out of 18
MOTIVATION/BENEFITS	
SALARY	2 out of 18
HEALTH/LIFE INSURANCE	4 out of 18
FLEXIBLE OR ALTERNATE WORK SCHEDULE	1 out of 18
PAID HOLIDAYS, SICK LEAVE, VACATION	4 out of 18
PAID TRAINING/EDUCATION	0 out of 18
POSSIBLE STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENT	0 out of 18
POSSIBLE BONUSES, INCENTIVES	1 out of 18
RETIREMENT	4 out of 18

Table 3. Table 3 Mid-Level Coding Guide

This comparison shows the majority of companies (15 out of 18) require a Bachelor's degree in a business-related field or including 24 hours of business are equal to that of ACC for the mid-level contract specialist position. Duties required for this position include pre- and post-award contracting functions and are listed for 14 out of 18 firms. Sixteen out of 18 organizations require some type of contracting experience and eleven require negotiation experience.

It is interesting to see again that only four companies list their benefit packages on the vacancy announcements. Three of those are the other government agencies. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) listed salary, health/life insurance, flexible or alternate work schedule, paid holidays, sick leave, vacation, possible incentives, and retirement for their benefits. All of the above benefits coincide with those listed by ACC. Therefore, this comparison shows that ACC exceeds private industry in listing benefits packages.

4. Supervisory-Level Data Analysis

A review of one ACC vacancy announcement and eighteen industry announcements for a supervisory-level Contract Specialist shows the following comparisons:

FINAL CODING – SUPERVISORY LEVEL	
CATEGORIES	
EDUCATION	
BACHELOR'S DEGREE	17 out of 18
WITH OR PLUS 24 HOURS OF BUSINESS	6 out of 18
KNOWLEDGE	
FAMILIAR WITH FAR ACQUISITION REGULATIONS	8 out of 18
BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY PRACTICES	3 out of 18
SKILLS/EXPERIENCE	
CONTRACTING EXPERIENCE	15 out of 18
NEGOTIATIONS	4 out of 18
DUTIES	
PRE AND POST AWARD FUNCTIONS	17 out of 18
NEGOTIATIONS	11 out of 18
MOTIVATION/BENEFITS	
SALARY	1 out of 18
HEALTH/LIFE INSURANCE	4 out of 18
FLEXIBLE OR ALTERNATE WORK SCHEDULE	2 out of 18
PAID HOLIDAYS, SICK LEAVE, VACATION	5 out of 18
PAID TRAINING/EDUCATION	2 out of 18
POSSIBLE STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENT	0 out of 18
POSSIBLE BONUSES, INCENTIVES	0 out of 18
RETIREMENT	3 out of 18

Table 4. Supervisory-Level Coding Guide

This comparison again illustrates that ACC is on the mark with education requirements in comparison to other government agencies and private industry. The majority

of companies (17 out of 18) require a Bachelor's degree in a business-related field or including 24 hours of business for the supervisory-level contract specialist position. Duties required for this position include pre and post-award contracting functions and are listed for 17 out of the 18 firms. Only 15 out of 18 organizations required some type of contracting experience, and four required negotiation experience for this position level.

It is interesting to see again that only five companies list their benefit packages on the vacancy announcements. Three of those are the other government agencies. The Department of Justice listed health/life insurance, flexible or alternate work schedule, paid holidays, sick leave, vacation, paid training/education and retirement for their benefits. All of the above benefits coincide with those listed by ACC. Army Contracting Command and other government agencies far exceed those in private industry for advertising benefits packages.

E. OMISSIONS

There were several categories that were not captured by the coding guide in the comparison of ACC vacancy announcements and those of other government agencies or private industry. These omissions are important to this research in that they show what other government agencies or private industry is advertising for in their job announcements compared to ACC. These omissions will be a basis for recommendations for ACC to improve their vacancy announcements. They are as follows:

1. Entry Level

One category that was not captured by the above coding guide is the Skills/Experience required for the position. The review of the announcements revealed that seven out of seventeen announcements required contracting or purchasing experience for the position. A review of the ACC entry-level announcement showed that specialized experience is listed and states that "...candidates for this position must identify in their resume that they possess one year of specialized experience at the next lowest grade..." Nowhere in the announcement does ACC specify the details of that experience.

2. Mid-Level

Items that were not captured on the coding guide and of special interest for this position level is that nine out of eighteen companies required knowledge of the Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR). One was FEM, and four were Fortune 500 firms who probably do business with the government. Also, five of the eighteen firms required or preferred professional certifications (i.e., CPM, CPSM, and DAWIA).

A review of the ACC mid-level announcement showed that one year of experience directly related to the occupation and equivalent to at least the GS-11 level is required. Nowhere in the announcement does it specify or explain what experience is expected.

3. Supervisory Level

Professional certifications were not captured on this coding guide for supervisory contract specialist.

Six of the eighteen firms required or preferred professional certifications (i.e., CPM, CFCM, CPIM, CPSM, and DAWIA). One of the six firms was a Fortune 500 company. The remaining five were other industry firms. It is noted that ACC does not list any preference for other professional certifications in the vacancy announcement for the supervisory level.

A review of the ACC supervisory level announcement showed that one year of specialized experience at the next lowest band or equivalent under the GS schedule or other pay system. Nowhere in the announcement does it specify of what that experience consists.

The omissions revealed above will be the basis for Recommendations and suggestions provided to Army Contracting Command to improve their advertising.

F. BENCHMARKING

According to The National Partnership for Reinventing Government (2000), when organizations need to improve their performance, they benchmark. Benchmarking is the comparison of one company's business processes and performance to the best in the industry. This research compares ACC to that of other government agencies and private industry (including Fortune 500 companies). The review of Fortune 500 company vacancy announcements serves as a benchmark from which to measure Army Contracting Command's announcements. These companies have revenues in the millions or billions of dollars and therefore may be considered to be on the same playing field as ACC.

The analysis also showed that the Fortune 500 companies placed an emphasis on the knowledge of Federal Acquisition Regulations where as ACC requires this for the supervisory level only.

This research has shown that the Fortune 500 companies advertise for Contract Specialists in pretty much the same way that ACC does, except that the majority of Fortune 500 companies do not list their benefits on the announcements. ACC can utilize this information by bringing the benefits it lists to a place of greater attention in the announcement. This action may draw additional applicants to ACC based on the economy and the need for applicants to be covered by health insurance, etc.

The following table illustrates some of the best practices that were found during this analysis of vacancy announcements.

MOTIVATIONAL PRACTICES	EXAMPLE	PRINCIPLE FOR BETTER ADVERTISING
All levels	Lists all employee benefits including salary, paid vacations, sick leave, holidays, health/life insurance, paid training or education, possible student loan repayment, retirement, possible bonuses or incentives, flexible or alternate work Schedule (Army Contracting Command and other government agencies)	Provides competitive advantage
Mid-level	Description of career opportunities includes: Detect and expose identity & benefit fraud Combat human smuggling & trafficking Fight child exploitation Department of Homeland Security (Immigration & Customs)	Targets people who want to make a difference

Mid-level	Motivating introduction to FEMA: "When disaster strike, America Looks to FEMA. Now FEMA looks to you…." Federal Emergency Management Agency	Targets people who want to help others
CULTURE		
All levels	Describes mission of agency involved. (Army Contracting Command and other government agencies)	Message helps target market become familiar with agency
All levels	Describes the culture and history of the companies. (Fortune 500 companies (6 out of 16)	Message helps target market become familiar with company
DUTIES		
Mid & supervisory levels	Provided detailed list of responsibilities (Army Contracting Command, other government agencies) (Other industry firms - 10 out of 19)	Message informs target market in becoming familiar with services involved

Table 5. Best Practices

Many of the highlights or best practices noted in the advertisements were motivational or attention grabbing in nature and were located in the opening paragraphs of the announcements. The Department of Homeland Security described various career opportunities and the Federal Management Emergency Agency attempts to lure applicants with the idea of helping America at a time of need.

FEMA uses another form of motivation in their opening paragraph on the announcement, “When disaster strikes, America looks to FEMA. Now FEMA looks to you.” NASA uses, “Creativity. Ambition. Teamwork. A sense of daring. And a probing mind.” The Department of the

Interior starts their announcement with “Experience your America and build a fulfilling career.”

As a motivational entry/attention grabber, The Department of Labor states, “Opportunities are Open. Begin a challenging career with the U.S. Department of Labor, and you will help shape the workforce of tomorrow.” Army Contracting Command begins their announcements with “Challenge yourself — Be an Army Civilian - Go Army!” ACC should develop an attention grabbing opening statement.

By describing the history and culture of the company, ACC, other government agencies, one-third of the Fortune 500 companies and half of the other industry firms can get the applicant involved right away with their mission. This will encourage someone to apply for the position in question.

G. STRATEGIES

The analysis of Army Contracting Command’s vacancy announcements for Contract Specialists reveals the following advertising strategies:

CURRENT STRATEGIES	STRATEGIES TO ADD
Benefits are listed at the end of the announcement	Move list of benefits to the beginning of the job announcement and expand on the description of each benefit
Requires Bachelor's degree in a business related field or with 24 hours of business	Emphasize the possibility of student loan repayment or additional paid training and Educational opportunities available.
Lists duties but does not specifically address what skills are required	List the minimum specific skills required for each level of Contract Specialist
Currently advertises on USAJOBs.com and ArmyHire.com	Advertise vacancies on other Internet Web sites.

Table 6. Army Contracting Command Strategies Summary

The items in the “Strategies to Add” column will be the basis for recommendations for Army Contracting Command to improve their vacancy announcements for Contract Specialist positions.

H. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The content analysis of the ACC vacancy announcements in comparison to other government agencies and industry vacancy announcements shows that the same education level is required for all levels of Contract Specialists. The reviewed private firms (including Fortune 500 companies) and other government agencies regard education as an asset. Industry also regards the knowledge of the Federal Acquisition Regulations as a basic requirement at the supervisory level. Approximately a third of private industry requires or prefers professional certifications.

During the benchmarking process, the author found several best practices utilized by ACC, other government agencies and private industry. ACC was found to have a competitive advantage over private industry by listing employee benefits including salary, insurance, etc. ACC is shown by this research to have best practices over private industry by describing the history and culture of the agency. This action sends an informational message to the audience/applicant so they become familiar with ACC. Army Contracting Command's advertisement employs a best practice of informing applicants of duties to be performed in carrying out ACC's contracting mission.

Even with the best practices ACC uses, it is in direct competition with private industry and other government agencies for experienced, skilled contracting personnel. Therefore, it is in the best interests of ACC to adopt additional requirements into their vacancy announcements to improve their advertising. This analysis illustrates the need for ACC to revise their vacancy announcements in order to attract applicants with the right skills. Motivational attention grabbers may be another item to add to the ACC announcements.

Chapter V will provide the research conclusions, recommendations, and areas for further research.

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V. SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

A. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapters discussed the purpose and objectives of this study, provided background information, and introduced the primary and secondary research questions. This study discussed the current status of the Army Contracting Command workforce and the vacancy announcement processes for Contract Specialists. The current vacancy announcement process for private industry was discussed. Hiring guidelines suggested by external professional organizations was also reviewed. A content analysis utilizing keyword searches was conducted on vacancy announcements for entry-level, mid-level and Supervisory Contract Specialists for Army Contracting Command (ACC), other government agencies and private industry (including Fortune 500 companies). Best practices and strategies for Army Contracting Command were critiqued.

This final chapter provides a summary of the research presented, the answers to the primary and secondary research questions, the recommendations, and suggested areas for further research.

B. RESEARCH SUMMARY

This research focused on the content of Army Contracting Command job vacancy announcements, other government agencies and private industry announcements for entry-level, mid-level and Supervisory Contract Specialist positions.

Based on the research results, the answers to the primary and secondary research questions are as follows:

1. Primary Research Questions

a. Does the Army Contracting Command issue vacancy announcements that could attract skilled, experienced contracting personnel?

ACC's entry-level vacancy announcement does not specify a minimum level of contracting experience. However, the mid-level and supervisory vacancy announcements do specify some required contracting skills and experience that are required for the position. Therefore, ACC's current entry-level vacancy announcements do not currently sufficiently advertise for the skilled, experienced contracting personnel that will meet their mission requirements. ACC's current mid- and supervisory-level announcements show limited advertising for the skilled, experienced contracting personnel.

As stated previously in Chapter II, required skills for each level are listed in detail in the job descriptions located on the Office of Personnel Management Web site. Required skills can be extracted from the job description and listed in the job announcements.

b. Is this process successful or can it be improved?

While this research cannot prove how successful the current process is, but the research through the coding analysis does show that ACC meets the standards established by other organizations. A comparison of the motivational approaches (Chapter IV) shows that

attention-grabbing, introductory announcements were used by other government agencies to lure applicants.

Processes for the entry-level, mid-level and supervisory vacancy announcements for Contract Specialist positions can be enhanced. Further research could be performed to determine the amount of people hired from the current vacancy announcements and those hired after improving the advertising with skills adequately listed.

2. Secondary Research Questions

a. Do the vacancy announcements truly reflect the knowledge, skills and abilities required for ACC's contracting mission?

ACC's contracting mission dictates the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to complete the mission. These KSAs were discussed in Chapter II. The ACC vacancy announcements list very few KSAs. Chapter II discussed how key words were used to search resumes of applicants. These keywords (used for the coding analysis) were drawn from the skills and abilities listed on the vacancy announcements for the Contract Specialist position. However, ACC does not sufficiently list the required skills and abilities in their announcements.

Based on the research results and analysis presented above, the vacancy announcements do not truly reflect the knowledge, skills and abilities required for the ACC contracting mission. They do not specifically state what the minimum skills/experiences that are needed.

b. What knowledge, skills, abilities or requirements does private industry look for when posting a Contract Specialist job announcement, and which ones would be relevant to the Army's purpose?

As described in Chapter II, the knowledge, skills and abilities are drawn from position descriptions provided by the Office of Personnel Management to Army Contracting Command (OPM, 2010a). The results of this analysis are discussed below:

Entry-level Contract Specialist

In accordance with the seventeen reviewed vacancy announcements, private industry and other government agencies look for a Bachelor's degree in a business related field or in addition to 24 hours of business courses. This requirement is relevant to Army Contracting Commands contracting mission. However, no minimum skills or experience is listed.

A review of the ACC entry-level announcement showed that specialized experience is listed and states that "… candidates for this position must identify in their resume that they possess one year of specialized experience at the next lowest grade …." Nowhere in the announcement does it specify of what that experience consists. Any person reviewing an ACC announcement would probably not know where to locate this information. The entry-level announcement should list the minimum specific skills from the position description that required in order to be considered for the position.

Mid-level Contract Specialist

The majority of companies reviewed require a Bachelor's degree in a business related field or including 24 hours of business for the mid-level position of Contract Specialist. Duties listed include pre- and post-award contracting functions. Sixteen out of eighteen organizations require some type of contracting experience along with experience in negotiating.

The research revealed that 50 percent of private industry required knowledge of the Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR). This means that half of private industry is looking for qualified current or former government employees to join their firms. ACC should also be trying to attract former government employees. Private industry and other government agencies also placed an emphasis on professional certifications. All of these requirements would be relevant to Army Contracting commands contracting mission.

A review of the ACC mid-level announcement showed that one year of experience directly related to the occupation and equivalent to at least the GS-11 level is required. Nowhere in the announcement does it specify of explain what that experience consists.

Supervisory Contract Specialist

The majority of companies reviewed require a Bachelor's degree in a business related field or including 24 semester hours of study from an accredited institution of higher education in a business related field for the supervisory position of Contract Specialist. Fifteen out

of eighteen companies required contracting experience. Duties included all contracting functions.

The research revealed that 50 percent of private industry required knowledge of the Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR). This means that half of private industry is looking for qualified current or former government employees to join their firms. ACC could also be trying to attract former government employees and current government employees from other agencies. Private industry and other government agencies also placed an emphasis on professional certifications. All of these requirements would be relevant to Army Contracting commands contracting mission.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

As discussed in Chapter IV, there were several categories that were not captured by the coding guide in the comparison of ACC vacancy announcements and those of other government agencies or private industry. These omissions are important to this research in that they show what other government agencies or private industry is advertising for in their job announcements compared to ACC. These omissions are the basis for recommendations for ACC to improve their vacancy announcements.

This section provides recommendations for the content of specific levels of Contract Specialist announcements and overall recommendations to be utilized by Army Contracting Command for all announcements.

Even with the best practices utilized by ACC (as discussed in Chapter IV) the research shows that there is room for improvement in developing Contract Specialist

job vacancy announcements for Army Contracting Command. Although the current vacancy announcements do bring in applicants, they may not be bringing in or attracting the applicants with the specific minimum skills required for the position as listed in the position description provided by OPM. The following are recommendations that could improve the Contract Specialist job vacancy announcement by level:

Entry-Level Contract Specialist

- Specify the exact minimum skills and experience that is required for the position (not '…possess one year of specialized experience at the next lowest grade') Example: A review of the current ACC announcement showed that one year of specialized experience at the next lowest band or equivalent under the GS schedule or other pay system. Nowhere in the announcement does it specify of what that experience consists. ACC could state '…possess contracting skills, pre-award functions…' and other specific abilities or skills.

Mid-level Contract Specialist

- Add knowledge of the FAR is preferred.
- Add professional certifications (this could be listed as a desired quality to show a higher level of contracting experience).
- Specify the exact minimum skills and experience that is required for the position (not "...possess one year of specialized experience at the next lowest grade").

ACC could state “...possess contracting skills, pre-award functions...” and other specific abilities or skills.

Supervisory Contract Specialist

- Add professional certifications (this could be listed as a desired quality to show a higher level of contracting experience).
- ACC should clarify what consists of one year of specialized experience at the next lowest band or equivalent under the GS schedule or other pay system. ACC could state “...possess negotiation skills, develop performance standards, leadership functions...” and other specific abilities or skills.

1. Overall Recommendations

This research has shown that the majority of private industry does not list their benefit packages on their job announcements. Army Contracting Command lists their benefit packages (Best Practice) on the last page of the vacancy announcements in small print. ACC does have the competitive advantage over private industry on this issue. Of the private industry announcements reviewed, only a small portion listed their benefit package. It is recommended that ACC locate the benefits on page one and use them as a motivator to attract applicants.

Also, the author recommends that Army Contracting Command update or revise their motivational introductory statement on the announcements. Currently ACC’s announcements begin with “Challenge yourself – Be an Army

Civilian-Go Army!" While this can be considered by some to be a motivator, ACC should go further by stating what is exciting about being an Army Civilian. This could attract applicants to ACC.

Army Contracting Command must learn to compete with private industry and other government agencies for the recruitment, training, and retention of acquisition talent. ACC must improve the vacancy announcements (the focus of this research). ACC currently posts the announcements on www.usajobs.com or www.armyhire.com Web sites. ACC should post announcements on other Web sites (i.e., www.ncmahq.net or www.ism.ws) in order to attract more experienced/skilled applicants. This research discovered through the coding analysis and benchmarking processes that private industry (including Fortune 500 companies post on the aforementioned Web sites and many others.)

Army Contracting Command requires successful contracting outcomes to meet mission requirements. Contracting personnel with the right skills and motivation could provide ACC with those outcomes. In order to acquire more experienced contracting personnel people out of private industry, from other government agencies or lure former government employees, ACC needs to look at providing better compensation, incentives and benefit packages.

It is not known how these recommendations, if implemented, will impact the Army Contracting Command's requirements for Contract Specialists. However, further research could be performed to determine the impact.

D. AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The following areas for further research are based on the findings of this research.

1. Review Office of Personnel Management regulations and how they may impact/hinder the vacancy announcement process.
2. Research different avenues of retention for current employees.
3. Establish baseline for the vacancy announcement process.
4. Pursue research on providing better compensation, incentives and benefit packages to current and new employees.
5. Research the impact of any of these recommendations that are implemented by ACC.

E. SUMMARY/CONCLUSION

This chapter concludes the research performed comparing Contract Specialist vacancy announcements for Army Contracting Command with other government agencies and private industry best practices. As previously stated in this chapter, this research provided a summary of the conclusions uncovered during this research project. Additionally, it included recommendations that could assist Army Contracting Command in improving the vacancy announcements in order to match best practices with private industry and other government agencies for Contract Specialists. Finally, this chapter also included areas for further research regarding the Contract Specialist vacancy announcements.

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